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## Higher-Order Nonlocal Effects of a Relativistic Ponderomotive Force in High-Intensity Laser Fields

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We have developed a new formula for a relativistic ponderomotive force of transversely localized laser fields based on the noncanonical Lie perturbation method by finding proper coordinates and gauges in the variational principle. The formula involves new terms represented by second and third spatial derivatives of the field amplitude, so that the ponderomotive force depends not only on the local field gradient, but also on the curvature and its variation. The formula is then applicable to a regime in which the conventional formula is hardly applied such that nonlocal and/or global extent of the field profile becomes important. The result can provide a theoretical basis for describing nonlinear laser-plasma interaction including such nonlocal effects, which is examined via particle-in-cell simulation of laser propagation in a plasma with a super Gaussian transverse field profile.

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The ponderomotive force, which corresponds to the pressure of electromagnetic fields, is a central concern in understanding a wide class of nonlinear plasma physics and in exploring many applications [1]. The force has been derived by applying the averaging method to the equation of motion, and utilized as being proportional to the local field gradient [2–4]. An example is the force associated with high power lasers whose intensities lie in the relativistic regime for electrons, which are realized by reducing the pulse width and spot size. In such a regime, particles are ejected from the interaction region easily due to the ponderomotive force. Therefore, designing laser field patterns and controlling the interaction are of specific importance.

Recently, more delicate control of laser field profiles in plasmas has been anticipated. For instance, a flat-top super Gaussian beam, in which the ponderomotive force is significantly weakened near the axis, is considered to be preferable in maintaining long interaction between the laser and particles, and also in achieving efficient particle acceleration via the laser piston and/or Coulomb explosion mechanism [5,6]. In such a case, the force estimated from the conventional formula tends to be diminished, so that a residual higher-order force associated with a nonlocal profile becomes important. Furthermore, the effect of plasmas, such as charge separation and Coulomb force, and the resultant modulation to the laser field, has to be self-consistently determined in such a situation. However, there exists no formal theory to describe them correctly except direct numerical integration, which cannot provide a prospective guideline.

The ponderomotive force results from the first order perturbation for the expansion parameter  $\epsilon$ , the ratio between the particle excursion length and scale length of the field

amplitude gradient. In this method, the higher-order terms  $\epsilon^n$  ( $n \geq 2$ ), which represent the effects of nonlocal particle motion not simply expressed by the local field gradient, are neglected. However, when the first order term is diminished, such terms can survive and capture the dynamics. Based on this idea, we show a possible way to extend the previous theory.

One approach is to directly investigate the oscillatory terms in higher orders of  $\epsilon$  based on the averaging method. However, the result is not ensured up to higher orders since the method is not subject to the Hamiltonian structure. In this Letter, as a method keeping the Hamiltonian structure up to higher orders but avoiding the complication due to the usage of the limited class of canonical variables, we employ the variational principle in noncanonical phase space coordinates incorporated with the Lie transformation [7–9].

In the noncanonical Hamiltonian dynamics, the equation of motion is derived from the variational principle  $\delta \int \gamma_\mu dz^\mu = 0$ . Here,  $z^\mu = (t; \mathbf{q}, \mathbf{p}_c)$  and  $\gamma_\mu = (-h(\mathbf{q}, \mathbf{p}_c, t); \mathbf{p}_c, \mathbf{0})$  are given in the canonical coordinate, where  $h$  is the Hamiltonian. We use Latin indices that run from 1 to 6, whereas Greek run from 0 to 6. Using  $\gamma_\mu dz^\mu = \Gamma_\mu dZ^\mu$ , we obtain the variational principle and the corresponding equation of motion in the arbitrary noncanonical coordinate  $Z^\mu$  as

$$\frac{dZ^i}{dZ^0} = J^{ij} \left( \frac{\partial \Gamma_j}{\partial Z^0} - \frac{\partial \Gamma_0}{\partial Z^j} \right), \quad (1)$$

where  $J^{ij}$  is the Poisson tensor defined as the inverse of the Lagrange tensor  $\omega_{ij} \equiv \partial_i \Gamma_j - \partial_j \Gamma_i$ . Based on this procedure, we study the relativistic motion of a charged particle in a linearly polarized laser field propagating in the  $z$  direction and having an amplitude variation in the

transverse  $x$  direction. The normalized vector potential  $\mathbf{a} \equiv |q|\mathbf{A}/mc^2$  can be expressed as

$$\mathbf{a} = a_x(x) \sin \eta \hat{\mathbf{e}}_x, \quad (2)$$

where  $\eta = \omega t - k_z z$  is the phase,  $q$  and  $m$  are the charge and rest mass of the particle,  $c$  is the speed of light, and  $\omega$  and  $k_z$  are the angular frequency and the wave number in the  $z$  direction, respectively.

Here, we select a set of proper coordinate variables. First, instead of time  $t$ , we employ the phase  $\eta$  as the independent variable that satisfies  $d\eta/dt = \omega/\gamma$  in the uniform laser field. This relation corresponds to that between the time in the laboratory frame and the proper time of the particle. The choice of the variable  $\eta$  can exclude the essential difficulty in moving to the oscillation center coordinate in the electromagnetic wave, which has two variables  $t$  and  $z$  in the phase. Second, we choose the transverse mechanical momentum  $\mathbf{p}_\perp$  and  $p_\eta \equiv p_z - \gamma mc$  as phase space coordinates. The introduction of  $p_\eta$  is of specific importance since it significantly simplifies the Lagrange tensor. Then, the new coordinate  $z^\mu$ , covariant vector  $\gamma_\mu$ , and Hamiltonian  $K$  are given by

$$z^\mu = (\eta; x, y, z, p_x, p_y, p_\eta), \quad (3)$$

$$\gamma_\mu = (-K; \mathbf{p}_\perp + mc\sigma\mathbf{a}_\perp, p_\eta - mc\sigma\phi, 0, 0, 0), \quad (4)$$

$$K = -(2k_z p_\eta)^{-1} (m^2 c^2 + \mathbf{p}_\perp^2 + p_\eta^2) + mc\sigma\phi/k_z, \quad (5)$$

where  $\sigma \equiv q/|q|$  and  $\phi \equiv |q|\Phi/mc^2$ . Here,  $\Phi$  is the quasi-static scalar potential. Interestingly, the square root dependence of the relativistic Hamiltonian is removed. In addition, since  $\gamma_\mu$  is independent of the coordinates  $y$  and  $z$ , the corresponding components  $p_y$  and  $p_\eta - mc\sigma\phi$  are constants of motion according to Noether's theorem. Here, the scalar potential  $\phi$  is determined from the self-consistent density modulation and the Poisson equation. Though we will discuss this point later, the determination of  $\phi$  is out of scope in the present theoretical framework, and we hereafter neglect it without loss of generality.

In this coordinate, the equations of motion in the uniform field  $a_x(x) = a_0 = \text{const}$  are obtained, which lead to the figure-eight motion in the  $x$ - $z$  plane as

$$x^{(0)} = l_0 \sigma (\cos \eta - 1) + x_0, \quad (6)$$

$$z^{(0)} = \frac{k_z l_0^2}{4} \left( \eta - \frac{1}{2} \sin 2\eta \right) + \frac{1 - \zeta_0^2}{2k_z \zeta_0^2} \eta, \quad (7)$$

$$p_x^{(0)} = -mca_0 \sigma \sin \eta, \quad (8)$$

$$p_\eta^{(0)} = -mc\zeta_0, \quad (9)$$

and also  $y^{(0)} = y_0$  and  $p_y^{(0)} = 0$ , where  $l_0 = a_0/k_z \zeta_0$  is the excursion length and  $\zeta_0 = \gamma(\eta = 0) - p_{z0}/mc$  is a constant whose value is determined by the initial condition. Here, we assume the initial condition  $(\mathbf{x}_\perp, z, \mathbf{p}_\perp, p_z) = (\mathbf{x}_{\perp 0}, 0, 0, 0, p_{z0})$ . By using these solutions, we transform the coordinate  $z^\mu$  [Eq. (3)] to that of the oscillation center,  $Z^\mu = (\eta; X, Y, Z, P_x, P_y, p_\eta)$ . Their relation is defined as  $z^i = Z^i + \tilde{z}^{(0)i}$  where  $\tilde{z}^{(0)i}$  is the oscillatory component of the figure-eight motion in Eqs. (6)–(9). The new 1-form  $\Gamma_\mu dZ^\mu$  leads to the equation system in which the figure-eight oscillation is removed.

Next, we investigate the oscillation center motion in a nonuniform field introducing the expansion parameter  $\epsilon \sim l/L$ , where  $l \equiv a_x(X)/k_z \zeta_0$  is the figure-eight excursion length and  $L^{-1} \equiv \partial_x \ln a_x(x)|_{x=X} = a_x^{-1} \partial_x a_x$  is the scale length of the gradient of the laser field amplitude. Then, we expand  $a_x(x)$  in Eq. (2) around  $x = X$  as

$$a_x(x) = a_x(X) \left[ 1 + \epsilon \frac{\tilde{x}}{L} + \epsilon^2 \frac{\tilde{x}^2}{2!L} + \epsilon^3 \frac{\tilde{x}^3}{3!L} + \cdots \right], \quad (10)$$

where  $\tilde{x} \equiv X - x$ . Here,  $R^{-1} \equiv a_x^{-1} \partial_x^2 a_x$  and  $T^{-1} \equiv a_x^{-1} \partial_x^3 a_x$  are the curvature of the field amplitude and its derivative, respectively. In the above definitions,  $l^2/R \sim \epsilon^2$  and  $l^3/T \sim \epsilon^3$  are assumed. The corresponding covariant vector is given by

$$\Gamma_0 = -K + \frac{p_\eta k_z l^2}{4} \alpha^2 - (1 + \alpha) \sigma P_x l \sin \eta - \epsilon \frac{mc}{2} l \tilde{a}_x (1 - \cos 2\eta), \quad (11)$$

$$\Gamma_1 = (P_x + \epsilon mc \sigma \tilde{a}_x \sin \eta) \left( 1 + \sigma \frac{l}{L} \cos \eta \right) + \epsilon \frac{p_\eta k_z l}{4} \frac{l}{L} \alpha^2 \sin 2\eta, \quad (12)$$

and  $(\Gamma_2, \Gamma_3, \Gamma_4, \Gamma_5) = (P_y, p_\eta, 0, 0)$  and  $\Gamma_6 = k_z l^2 (1 - \alpha^2) \times \sin(2\eta)/8$ , where  $\tilde{a}_x \equiv a_x(x) - a_x(X)$  and  $\alpha(p_\eta) \equiv mc\zeta_0/p_\eta$ . Here,  $K$  has the same functional form as Eq. (5) but is described by the new coordinate variables. In deriving the above  $\Gamma_\mu$ , we used the gauge function

$$S_0 = \frac{p_\eta k_z l^2}{8} (1 + \alpha^2) \sin 2\eta, \quad (13)$$

which contributes to remove oscillations in the zeroth order of  $\epsilon$  from the 1-form.

In the Lie perturbation method, we consider near-identity coordinate transformations to obtain a simple description of the problem. We can utilize  $2N + 2$  ( $N = 3$ ) degrees of freedom determined by the  $2N + 1$  Lie generators  $g^\mu$

and a gauge function  $S$ . Here, we employ a transformation, which removes higher-order oscillations from the 1-form, that leads to secular equations of motion up to the higher orders. This requirement is satisfied by choosing  $\gamma_i^{(n)} = 0$  together with

$$\gamma_0^{(n)} = \overline{[(\partial_\nu S^{(n-1)})^{(n)} - (g^{(n-1)j} \omega_{j\nu})^{(n)} + C_\nu^{(n)}] V^{(0)\nu}},$$

for  $n \geq 1$ , where  $C_\mu^{(n)}$  is a vector obtained from the lower order calculations and  $V^{(0)\mu}$  is the unperturbed flow vector defined by  $V^{(0)0} = 1$  and  $V^{(0)i}(z^\mu) = dz^{(0)i}/dz^0$  [7]. Here, the overline indicates the average over one cycle of  $\eta$ .

Now, based on Eqs. (11) and (12), we execute the Lie transformation  $Z^\mu \mapsto Z'^\mu = (\eta; X', Y', Z', P'_x, P'_y, p'_\eta)$ , which removes oscillations up to  $\epsilon^3$ . In coordinate  $Z'^\mu$ , we obtain the Hamiltonian component  $\Gamma_0'$  in each order as

$$\Gamma_0^{(0)} = -K + \frac{p_\eta k_z l^2}{4} \alpha^2 - (1 + \alpha) \sigma P'_x l \sin \eta, \quad (14)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \Gamma_0^{(2)} = & -\epsilon^2 \frac{l}{16} p'_\eta k_z l \left[ A \frac{l^2}{R} + B \frac{l^2}{L^2} \right] \\ & + \epsilon^2 \frac{P_x'^2}{p'_\eta k_z} \left[ \frac{1}{2} (1 + \alpha) \frac{l^2}{R} - \left( \alpha + \frac{1}{4} \right) \frac{l^2}{L^2} \right], \end{aligned} \quad (15)$$

and  $\Gamma_0^{(1)} = \Gamma_0^{(3)} = 0$ , where  $A = \alpha^4 + 4\alpha^3 + 2\alpha^2$  and  $B = 7\alpha^4/4 + 8\alpha^3 + 6\alpha^2$ . Since we define  $g^\mu$  and  $S$  to satisfy  $\gamma_i^{(n)} = 0$  ( $n \geq 1$ ), the phase space component keeps the same functional form as that in the zeroth order as  $\Gamma_i' = (P'_x, P'_y, p'_\eta, 0, 0, \Gamma_0^{(0)})$ . Note here that odd orders of the Hamiltonian component,  $\Gamma_0^{(1)}$  and  $\Gamma_0^{(3)}$  are zero. Then, the second and fourth order forces do not appear since the  $n$ th order Hamiltonian leads to the force of  $(n+1)$ th order as seen from the  $(i, j) = (4, 1)$  component in Eq. (1). Consequently, the higher-order force next to the first order is found to be the third order  $\epsilon^3$ . The next order correction to the third order is expected to be  $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon^5)$  from the requirement that the force is free from the sign of the charge  $\sigma$ , so that only the terms proportional to  $\sigma^{2n}$  ( $n = 1, 2, \dots$ ) can be retained in the secular 1-form.

The equations of motion can be obtained from  $\Gamma_\mu' dZ'^\mu$  as Eq. (1). For  $i = 2, 5$  and  $6$ ,  $dY'/d\eta = -P_y'/k_z p'_\eta$ ,  $dP_y'/d\eta = 0$ , and  $dp'_\eta/d\eta = 0$  are derived, which lead to  $Y' = y_0$ ,  $P_y' = 0$ , and  $p'_\eta = -mc\zeta_0$ . By utilizing them, in the  $X'$  direction, i.e.,  $i = 1$  and  $4$ , we obtain

$$\frac{dX'}{d\eta} = \frac{P'_x}{mc\zeta_0 k_z} \left( 1 + \epsilon^2 \frac{3}{2} \frac{l^2}{L^2} \right), \quad (16)$$

$$\frac{dP'_x}{d\eta} = -\frac{mca_x}{2} \left[ \epsilon \frac{l}{L} + \frac{\epsilon^3}{8} \left( \frac{7}{2} \frac{l^2}{LR} + \frac{l^3}{T} + \frac{1}{2} \frac{l^3}{L^3} \right) \right]. \quad (17)$$

Here, a term proportional to  $P_x'^2(l/L)(l^2/R)$  additionally appears in the right-hand side of Eq. (17); however, we neglect it since  $P_x'$  is order  $\epsilon$ , so that the term is  $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon^5)$ . Note here that  $a_x$ ,  $l$ ,  $L$ ,  $R$ , and  $T$  are functions of  $X'$ . Equation (16) and specifically Eq. (17), which determine the transverse secular motion of the oscillation center up to  $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon^3)$ , are the central results in the present study. As seen in Eq. (17), the next order ponderomotive force followed by the first order is  $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon^3)$ , which consists of the terms proportional to the second and third spatial derivatives of the field, and also to the cube of the field gradient. Thus, the ponderomotive force depends not only on the local field gradient, but also on the field curvature and its derivative (spatial variation of curvature), which correspond to higher-order nonlocal structures not simply described by the local gradient.

The role of the higher-order nonlocal effects described in Eq. (17) can be explained as follows. When the field exhibits a concave (convex) structure with a positive (negative) curvature  $l^2/R > 0 (< 0)$  symmetrical to the oscillation center  $X$ , the excursion length increases (decreases) due to the increase (decrease) of the cycle-averaged field amplitude. However, since the change is symmetric for  $X$ , the nonlocal effect from the curvature is cancelled during one cycle of  $\eta$ , and, therefore,  $l^2/R$  alone does not produce a ponderomotive force. In Eq. (17), the symmetry associated with the curvature  $l^2/R$  is broken due to the coupling with the gradient  $l/L$ . Consequently, an asymmetry is produced in the particle orbit, which leads to a ponderomotive force influenced by the curvature. On the other hand, when the field has a third derivative, the orbit also becomes asymmetric but with a different manner. In this case, even when the field gradient is zero at the oscillation center, the nonlocal effect associated with the third derivative yields a finite ponderomotive force.

As discussed in the introduction, the laser field in plasmas suffers from the reaction, so that the interaction has to be determined self-consistently. For this purpose, governing equations, such as the nonlinear Schrödinger (NS) equation, wave kinetic equation, etc., have been explored [10,11]. For instance, in the NS equation, which describes the envelope of laser fields in plasmas, a balance relation between the ponderomotive force  $\mathbf{F}_p$  and Coulomb force  $-\nabla\phi$  that leads to

$$\omega_p^2 \frac{\delta n_e}{Zn_0} = \frac{1}{m_e} \nabla \cdot \mathbf{F}_p, \quad (18)$$

is incorporated with a wave equation based on the eikonal approximation. Here,  $\omega_p$  is the plasma frequency,  $\delta n_e$  is the electron density modulation from the background plasma density  $n_0$ ,  $Z$  is the ion charge state, and  $m_e$  is the rest mass of the electron. As for the ponderomotive force  $\mathbf{F}_p$ , the first order formula proportional to the local field gradient is generally utilized.



Now, the idea of the nonlocal ponderomotive force presented here can be applied to generalize the NS equation. In this case, three procedures are necessary; i.e., one is deriving the corresponding equations of motion keeping the electrostatic potential in Eqs. (16) and (17), equivalently in Eqs. (4) and (5), and the other two are deriving the wave equation and Poisson equation whose coordinates are transformed to those in the present noncanonical Lie perturbation analysis. The inertia term in the equation of motion can be neglected, which leads to a balance relation between the ponderomotive force and Coulomb force. Then, the resultant three equations form a generalized NS equation system. Though derivation of the equation system is a future work, we can readily see that the equation system exhibits higher-order spatial derivatives, i.e., the fourth order spatial derivatives, while the second order in the conventional NS equation. Therefore, we can expect that the generalized NS equation system describes the propagation of laser fields with delicate field patterns such that the first order field gradient vanishes.

In order to investigate the propagation of laser fields in such a situation, here we carry out two-dimensional fully relativistic electromagnetic particle-in-cell simulations. We consider the interaction between a laser beam and underdense hydrogen plasma. We assume a laser field given by  $a_x(x) = a_0 \exp(-x^s/w^s)$  with the wavelength  $\lambda_L = 0.82 \mu\text{m}$ , where  $a_0$  is the amplitude at the beam axis and  $w$  the beam radius. Here, we consider the case of  $s = 2$ , a Gaussian beam, and also  $s = 4$  and  $6$ , super Gaussian beams. We employ periodic and outgoing boundary conditions in the  $x$  and  $z$  directions with the size of  $L_x = 40 \mu\text{m}$  and  $L_z = 80 \mu\text{m}$ . The mesh numbers in the  $x$  and  $z$  directions are  $N_x = 512$  and  $N_z = 2048$ , respectively. The laser whose electric field  $\mathbf{E}$  is in the  $x$  direction is emitted by the antenna at  $z = 0.16 \mu\text{m}$  with a Gaussian time profile that reaches the maximum value  $a_0$  at  $t = 4 \text{ fsec}$  and then keeps the constant value. Here,  $w = 5 \mu\text{m}$ , and  $a_0 = 4.41, 4$ , and  $3.84$  for  $s = 2, 4$ , and  $6$  are assumed, respectively, which keeps the integrated value of  $E_x^2$  over  $x$  the same for each polynomial  $s$ . The plasma is distributed in the region  $2.5 \leq z \leq 80 \mu\text{m}$  with a linear slope in  $2.5 \leq z \leq 10 \mu\text{m}$ . The electron density in  $z > 10 \mu\text{m}$  is  $n_e = 0.02n_c$  where  $n_c$  is the cutoff density.

In Fig. 1(a), we show the electron density distribution  $n_e$  in the  $x$ - $z$  plane in the case of  $s = 4$ , a super Gaussian case, at  $t = 135, 151$ , and  $167 \text{ fsec}$ , respectively. As the laser propagates, the electrons are evacuated from the central region due to the transverse ponderomotive force leading to a channel formation with a density wall at the peripherals of the laser beam. However, it is interesting to note that a density hump localized near the beam axis can be seen. This is due to the fact that the ponderomotive force is significantly reduced near the beam axis ascribed to the flat-top nature of the  $s = 4$  super Gaussian beam. The electron density profiles near the axis for  $s = 4$  are shown in

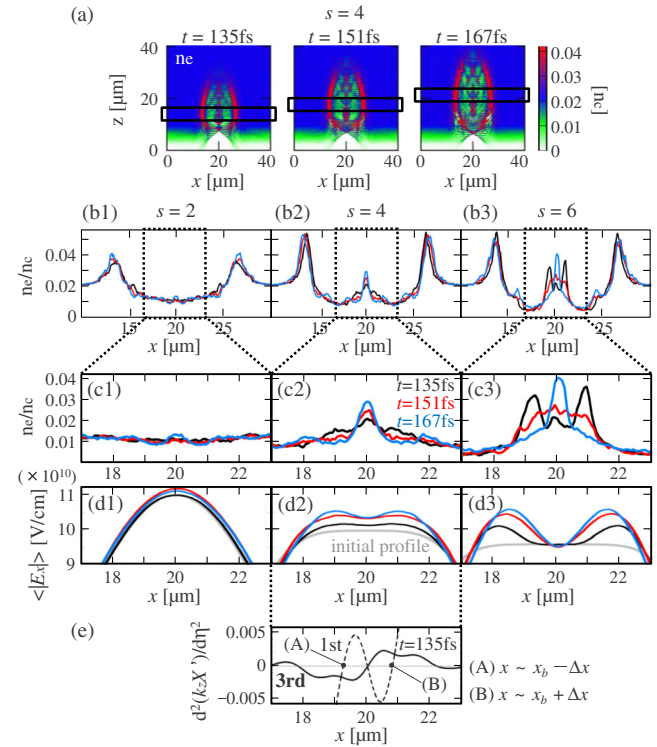


FIG. 1 (color online). Particle-in-cell simulation for the interaction between a plasma and laser beam with the Gaussian ( $s = 2$ ) and super Gaussian ( $s = 4, 6$ ) transverse beam profiles. (a) Electron density distribution in the  $x$ - $z$  plane for  $s = 4$ . (b1)–(b3) Transverse electron density profiles for  $s = 2, 4$ , and  $6$ . (c1)–(c3) Electron density and (d1)–(d3) electric field profiles in a limited region in (b1)–(b3). (e) The first and third order ponderomotive forces obtained from Eqs. (16) and (17) for the field profile given in (d2).

Fig. 1(b1) at three times that are the same as those in Fig. 1(a). Note here that the profiles are averaged over  $5 \mu\text{m}$  along the moving frame in the  $z$  direction shown by the squares in Fig. 1(a). The velocity of the moving frame is taken to be  $v_z = c(1 - 1/\gamma) \sim 0.8c$ , which corresponds to the drift velocity of the particle irradiated by the uniform laser field of  $a_0 = 4$ . Therefore, the density profiles at the three times correspond to those of the Lagrangian density, which consists of almost the same particles traveling with the moving frame. The detailed structures of the density and field are shown in Figs. 1(c2) and 1(d2), respectively, where a limited region in Fig. 1(b2) is enlarged. It is found that the density near the axis exhibits a peaking as time goes on while the laser field amplitude changes the profile from the flat-top structure of  $s = 4$  to a weak concave structure with a positive curvature.

The structures of the density and laser field in the cases of the  $s = 2$  Gaussian and the  $s = 6$  super Gaussian beams are shown in Figs. 1(b1), 1(c1), 1(d1) and Figs. 1(b3), 1(c3), 1(d3), respectively. It is found that the density hump becomes wider for  $s = 6$  than that for  $s = 4$  while almost disappearing for  $s = 2$ , suggesting that

the flatter the field profile is, the broader the hump becomes. Correspondingly, the field profile suffers from a significant change, leading to a prominent hollow structure for  $s = 6$ , whereas suffers from little change essentially keeping the Gaussian profile for  $s = 2$ . The first and third order ponderomotive forces  $d^2(k_x X')/d\eta^2$  obtained from Eqs. (16) and (17) are shown in Fig. 1(e) for the field profile given in Fig. 1(d2) at  $t = 135$  fsec for  $s = 4$ . Besides the beam axis, two points (A) and (B) at which the field gradient and then the first order ponderomotive force vanish, i.e.,  $x \sim x_b \pm \Delta x$  where  $x_b = 20 \mu\text{m}$  is the beam axis and  $\Delta x \sim 0.8 \mu\text{m}$  in this case, are found to appear. Namely, the higher-order ponderomotive force plays an important role in regulating the interaction around  $x_b - 1.5\Delta x < x < x_b + 1.5\Delta x$ . Interestingly, the width  $1.5\Delta x$  roughly corresponds to that of the density hump observed in Fig. 1(c2). This relation is found to be fulfilled also in the case of  $s = 6$  where  $\Delta x \sim 1.6 \mu\text{m}$  is estimated from Figs. 1(c3) and 1(d3). These structure and dynamics are considered to result from plural physical processes such as the higher-order ponderomotive force near the axis described by Eqs. (16) and (17), the resultant density modulation, generation of the Coulomb field, and change of the linear and nonlinear susceptibilities.

In conclusion, based on the noncanonical Lie perturbation method, we derived a new formula of a relativistic ponderomotive force that depends not only on the local field gradient, but also on the curvature and its variation representing the effect of higher-order nonlocal particle motion. The formula can provide a theoretical basis and guideline for describing structures and dynamics in nonlinear laser-plasma interaction covering a wider regime in which the first order ponderomotive force is weakened and/or vanished. The delicate control of the laser field pattern in plasmas is an important concern for exploring innovative applications using laser-matter interaction,

e.g., laser channeling in plasmas and efficient particle acceleration [12]. Here, we examined the nonlocal ponderomotive theory by comparing it with direct numerical simulations for the propagation of super Gaussian laser beams in a plasma and showed that the higher-order terms play an important role in causing prominent self-consistent structure formation and dynamics such as a density hump and hollow field structure.

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